

Task force arrests 52 in four-day roundup

Most wanted of 500 fugitives captured

By Kevin Graman

Staff writer

There are fewer criminals on the streets in and around Spokane today thanks to a four-day sweep by a joint law enforcement task force, a federal marshal said Friday.

As a result of the sweep, which began Monday and ended Thursday afternoon, 52 criminals were arrested and 93 felony cases were cleaned, U.S. Marshal Mike Kline said. Many of those arrested had multiple counts against them.

"These are the people who are most dangerous or who we wanted off the street the most," Kline said.

The Eastern Washington Joint Fugitive Task Force comprises the U.S. Marshals Service, Spokane County Sheriff's Office and the Department of Corrections. This week, the task force was assisted by the Spokane Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Together, the agencies put 21 officers and three supervisors on the trail of 500 fugitives wanted on felony warrants. The targeted suspects were ranked in importance with violent crimes topping the list, followed by sex crimes and delivery of controlled substances. The names on the list were provided by the city and county's Crime Analysis Unit based on criminal records, driver's license records and other intelligence.

Among those picked up in the sweep were Darrell R. Abbott, wanted on a charge of first-degree child molestation; Kelly L. Hopkins, on second-degree assault; Patrick Passmore, on first-degree escape and Jason D. Anderson, on first-degree burglary.

"This is the first time we've done this on this level," said Kline, who announced the operation at news conference at the Spokane Federal Building with Undersheriff Larry Lindskog, Assistant Police Chief Jim Nicks and Community Corrections Specialist Joe Letourneau.

The task force has settled more than 1,121 criminal cases since it was created in October 2000, Kline said.

The fugitives rounded up this week were booked into the Spokane County Jail. Many also had misdemeanor warrants out for their arrest. As a bonus, the task force recovered quantities of crack cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana and one stolen car during the arrests.

"Evidence and intelligence we gathered during the arrests allowed us to forward substantial investigative leads to local and federal drug investigative agencies," Kline said in a news release .

"The chase does not end here," he said of the fugitives who were not arrested this week. The task force was able to develop solid leads on many of the 448 who remain at large.

Kline said the operation was funded out of the various agencies' operating budgets. The Marshals Office, he said "was able to find a few extra dollars" for the sweep.